



Incest by grandmother with dementia: a case report

Incest by grandmother with dementia

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Abstract

Incest sexual abuse is defined as any sexual behavior applied to a child by close relatives. Incest is often between biological or stepfather and child or between siblings, less frequently between other family members. Victims are often girls. But sometimes boys can be victims of incest as well. Dementia is a disease that causes loss of intellectual function. It is usually permanent and progressive, and it increases the risk of elderly abuse and neglect. This case report presents incest sexual abuse of a boy by his grandmother.

Keywords

Child; Dementia; Incest

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Introduction

Dementia is a clinical, usually permanent, and progressive disease with loss of acquired intellectual functions. In fact, it is not a single disease, instead, it is a syndrome consisting of symptoms that can be caused by more than one etiologic cause. In patients, cognitive, behavioral and functional impairments occur, but there is no blurring of consciousness. Dementia patients may have memory, attention, perception problems, mood and thought disorders, decrease in self-care, personality changes and socially inappropriate behaviors [1].

With aging of the population, the frequency of dementia in the community is also increasing. While the incidence of moderate to severe dementia over 65 years is about 5%, it is 20-40% over 85 years [2].

Child abuse includes all types of neglect and abuse. It is an important public health problem in all countries. It is estimated that about 20% of children in the USA are abused. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 12% of these children are victims of emotional abuse, 9% physical abuse, 1% sexual abuse, and 4% neglect [3]. Actual numbers may be higher when unreported cases are considered. Abuse and neglect are serious problems that can cause physical and mental diseases and even death in short-term and long-term.

Incest sexual abuse is defined as any sexual behavior applied to a child by close relatives. It is often between biological or stepfather and child, but sometimes between siblings. Less frequently, it is seen between grandparents and grandchildren, and uncle and girl or boy. A study in Turkey reported that 10.2% of 1002 sexually abused children were victims of incest [4]. Regardless of the abuser, sexual abuse causes important psychological damage to a child. These include acute stress disorders, post traumatic stress disorder, dissociative disorders, anxiety and depressive disorders [5]. It is also hard to uncover this condition in the family and it has negative consequences on all family members. Therefore all physicians should be careful about this subject.

This case report presents incest sexual abuse of a boy by his grandmother with dementia.

Case Report

The patient aged 12 years came to the clinic with his mother. The patient is a 7th grade student. His mother is 45 years old, housewife. Father is 55 years old, working as a public servant. The patient has an older sister. She is a college student in another city. Their socioeconomic level is moderate. They live at home with their grandmother, who is 70 years old and has dementia for 5 years. Twenty days before the patient applied to the outpatient clinic, he has told his mother: "My grandmother asked me does your penis erect? I passed on to another room, my grandmother came from behind and we had sex with my grandmother". Many times before this incident, she asked the boy sexually explicit questions, and the child was disturbed by them. Especially the last event affected him mentally. He could not forget what his grandmother did, he felt guilty, and he saw the incident in his dreams. His mother stated that he had been more vigilant for the last 1 month at home, he spent less time at home, especially when his grandmother was in the same room, instead of spending time with the family, he chose

to spend time alone in his room and was less concerned with lessons and assignments. His teachers told that he was more aggressive at school and exhibit impulsive behaviors. During the interview, he stated that he did not want to talk about the incident, that he was so embarrassed, that he did not want to see his grandmother, he did not want to live in the same house with her anymore, and that he was very angry with himself for allowing her to do this.

Mental status examination revealed that his appearance was appropriate with his age, self-care was appropriate with his socioeconomic status, and his weight was normal. He was conscious, fully oriented. His affect was depressed. His thought content was dominated by the incident. He tried to avoid talking about the incident. His attention, memory and perception level, abstract thinking, reasoning and clinically evaluated mental development were normal.

In his medical history, he was born at term with spontaneous vaginal delivery; no complications occurred at birth or afterwards and developmental milestones were achieved at appropriate times.

Anamnesis and clinical examination revealed that he had post-traumatic stress disorder. Fluoxetine treatment 10 mg/day in the first week, and 20 mg/day in the second week was started. Due to increase in impulsive behaviors and sleep disturbance, risperidone 0.5 mg/day was added to the treatment. Upon learning that the grandmother was positive for hepatitis C, screening tests were performed for sexually transmitted diseases. He was consulted to a social worker for social evaluation.

Discussion

Childhood abuse and neglect is a common problem which can recur, may cause various physical and mental pathologies, even death. Child may be abused by caregivers, relatives or unrelated people. Sexual exploitation victims were usually female in incest cases, although boys were also sexually exploited [6]. In recent years, elder abuse and neglect has become a widely discussed topic. Elder abuse and neglect can be in the form of physical violence to old individual, not providing his/her personal care or deliberately harming mentally. All older individuals are at risk of abuse. This risk is increased in the presence of a mental illness, such as dementia, or a physical illness or disability [7]. Having dementia increases the risk for neglect and abuse of the elderly and also may lead to other risks.

Behavioral disorders are common in demented elderly patients. Although inappropriate verbal and physical sexual behaviors are not as common as behavioral disorders, these behaviors in consequence disturb their spouses and other relatives. Although hypersexuality in Alzheimer's disease has been rarely investigated although it causes significant mental and physical damage that may lead to such inappropriate behaviors [8].

Given the family structure and cultural characteristics of our society, elderly and sick individuals and children are often live in the same environment. Usually, elderly parents are cared by their children. Generally, both of the spouses work and their children stay with their grandmothers and grandfathers. In fact, living with older parents is often an important source of social support for parents in the care of children. However, as presented in the case in some situations, a variety of risks may arise.

In our case, it is interesting that elder individual, who is under risk of neglect and abuse actually sexually exploited her grandson who seemed to be under less risk for abuse. In addition, presence of a sexually transmitted disease in the grandmother increased risks. Considering the presented case, care should be exercised to protect both risk groups. Physicians should evaluate presenting cases carefully and in suspected cases, social evaluations should be performed and appropriate measures should be taken.

Apart from individual measures, public measures such as increasing the number and elevating standards of elderly nursing homes, education regarding elderly care, increasing awareness of children and their families about neglect and abuse, giving children education about special parts of their body, good and bad touches and what to do when such a situation happens and how to get help should be undertaken.

Conclusion

Neglect and abuse are major social problems and the most important issue is early awareness and protection. The elderly and children constitute two important and featured groups in terms of abuse and neglect. Especially physicians working with these two groups should evaluate their patients about neglect and abuse.

Scientific Responsibility Statement

The authors declare that they are responsible for the article's scientific content including study design, data collection, analysis and interpretation, writing, some of the main line, or all of the preparation and scientific review of the contents and approval of the final version of the article.

Animal and human rights statement

All procedures performed in this study were in accordance with the ethical standards of the institutional and/or national research committee and with the 1964 Helsinki declaration and its later amendments or comparable ethical standards. No animal or human studies were carried out by the authors for this article.

Conflict of interest

None of the authors received any type of financial support that could be considered potential conflict of interest regarding the manuscript or its submission.

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